



Opinion

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Reverse discrimination in New Black Panther case

Examiner Editorial
July 7, 2010

Surely President Obama does not support the U.S. Department of Justice's outrageous decision to drop prosecution of the most blatant example of voter intimidation likely ever caught on video, the New Black Panther case in Philadelphia in 2008. Obama needs to tell Attorney General Eric Holder to reverse the decision before this thing explodes into a scandal of epic proportions. More important, Obama should make clear to Holder and to America that he expects the Justice Department to prosecute *all* federal voter intimidation cases to the fullest extent of the law without regard to anything but the evidence at hand.

The evidence at hand in Philadelphia includes video of two thuggish African-American men dressed in military fatigues. As one wielded a baton in a menacing manner, they hurled racial slurs at white voters who understandably were scared away from the polling place. The Justice Department under President George W. Bush filed criminal charges against the two men. After Obama took office, default judgments resulted when the defendants failed to show for their trials. But Holder's Justice Department later dropped the charges following a plea deal in which one of the men agreed not to carry a weapon near the Philadelphia polling place until 2012. Both men are now free to intimidate voters again.

J. Christian Adams, one of the top Justice Department lawyers involved in the case, resigned to protest political interference he claims derailed prosecution of what he called "the clearest case of voter intimidation that I've seen since I've been practicing law." Adams has since claimed that Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli, an Obama political appointee, overruled a unanimous recommendation for continued prosecution by Adams and other attorneys involved. On Tuesday, Adams told the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights that Justice Department officials "over and over and over" showed "hostility" to prosecution of voter intimidation cases involving "black defendants and white victims." Former Justice Department colleagues are now coming forward to corroborate Adams' claims and to counter the department's charge that he "distorted facts."

This case must be made right as quickly as possible and with no room for further doubts about the



President Obama should order Attorney General Eric Holder to let Associate Attorney General Thomas Perrelli testify before the Commission on Civil Rights about alleged 2008 Black Panther voting fraud in Philadelphia. (Ahmad Massoud/AP)

integrity of Justice Department voter intimidation prosecutions. To that end, Obama should order Holder to let Perrelli and others in the department testify before the Commission on the Civil Rights and turn over all documents the commission has requested. Anything less at this point risks undermining five decades of distinguished federal voting rights enforcement that is among the enduring legacies of Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement.

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